

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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CODY PFLEGING,

Plaintiff,

-against-

CITY OF NEW YORK, JOSEPH CENTNER, Individually,
DOMINICK RASO, Individually, FRANK LUPO, Individually,
THOMAS REILLY, Individually, and JOHN and JANE DOE 1
through 10, Individually (the names John and Jane Doe being
fictitious, as the true names are presently unknown),

Defendants.
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**AMENDED
COMPLAINT**

13 CV 3742
(WFK) (VVP)

Jury Trial Demanded

Plaintiff CODY PFLEGING, by his attorneys, Leventhal & Klein, LLP, complaining of
the defendants, respectfully alleges as follows:

Preliminary Statement

1. Plaintiff brings this action for compensatory damages, punitive damages and attorneys' fees pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1988 for violations of his civil rights, as said rights are secured by said statutes and the Constitution of the United States. Plaintiff also asserts supplemental state law claims.

JURISDICTION

2. This action is brought pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1988, and the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution. Plaintiff asserts supplemental state law claims pursuant to common law and the New York State Constitution.

3. Jurisdiction is found upon 28 U.S.C. §§1331, 1343 and 1367.

VENUE

4. Venue is properly laid in the Eastern District of New York under 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), in that this is the District in which the claim arose.

JURY DEMAND

5. Plaintiff respectfully demands a trial by jury of all issues in this matter pursuant to Fed. R. Civ. P. 38 (b).

PARTIES

6. Plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is a twenty-five year old man presently residing in Staten Island, New York.

7. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK was and is a municipal corporation duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the State of New York.

8. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK maintains the New York City Police Department (hereinafter referred to as “NYPD”), a duly authorized public authority and/or police department, authorized to perform all functions of a police department as per the applicable sections of the aforementioned municipal corporation, CITY OF NEW YORK.

9. That at all times hereinafter mentioned, the individually named defendants, JOSEPH CENTNER, DOMINICK RASO, FRANK LUPO, THOMAS REILLY, and JOHN and JANE DOE 1 through 10, were duly sworn police officers of said department and were acting under the supervision of said department and according to their official duties.

10. That at all times hereinafter mentioned the defendants, either personally or through their employees, were acting under color of state law and/or in compliance with the official rules, regulations, laws, statutes, customs, usages and/or practices of the State of New

York and/or the City of New York.

11. Each and all of the acts of the defendants alleged herein were done by said defendants while acting within the scope of their employment by defendant CITY OF NEW YORK.

FACTS

12. On April 8, 2012, beginning at approximately 3:25 a.m., plaintiff was present in the vicinity of Forest Avenue and Walbrooke Avenue, when he was unjustifiably assaulted and battered by the defendant NYPD officers, believed to be JOSEPH CENTNER, DOMINICK RASO, and FRANK LUPO.

13. At the time of the assault, plaintiff was fully compliant with the defendant officers and standing facing a window, with his hands in the air, on the window.

14. While plaintiff was standing in said position, an officer pressed his baton into the back of plaintiff's neck.

15. Plaintiff then stated in sum and substance, I'm doing everything you're telling me to do, what do you want me to do?

16. In response, a defendant officer grabbed plaintiff and threw him to the ground.

17. Once plaintiff was on the ground, defendant officers, believed to be CENTNER, RASO, and LUPO, participated in repeatedly striking plaintiff in the face and ribs, causing plaintiff to sustain injuries.

18. Plaintiff sought treatment at Staten Island University Hospital on April 8, 2012, on which dates he was diagnosed with a concussion, closed head injury, subconjunctival hemorrhage of his left eye, and multiple abrasions to his left eyelid, right shoulder, right knee,

and throat.

19. Defendant THOMAS REILLY, who holds the rank of Sergeant, supervised defendants CENTNER, RASO, LUPO, and JOHN and JANE DOE 1 through 10, and approved of and/or oversaw the unreasonable use of force against plaintiff, and failed to notify internal affairs of said use of force, despite his duty to do so.

20. Defendants CENTNER, RASO, LUPO, REILLY, and JOHN and JANE DOE 1 through 10 directly participated in, or were present, or otherwise aware of the aforementioned acts of unreasonable force, and failed to intervene despite a meaningful opportunity to do so.

21. All of the above occurred as a direct result of the unconstitutional policies, customs or practices of the City of New York, including, without limitation, the inadequate screening, hiring, retaining, training, and supervising of its employees.

22. The aforesaid event is not an isolated incident. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK is aware (from lawsuits, notices of claims, and complaints filed with the NYPD's Internal Affairs Bureau, and the CITY OF NEW YORK'S Civilian Complaint Review Board) that many NYPD officers, including the defendants, are insufficiently trained regarding the use of force and improperly use force against individuals in retaliation for their exercise of their right to free speech, and that they engage in falsification.

23. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK is further aware that such improper training has often resulted in a deprivation of civil rights. Despite such notice, defendant CITY OF NEW YORK has failed to take corrective action. This failure caused the officers in the present case to violate the plaintiff's civil rights.

24. Moreover, upon information and belief, defendant CITY OF NEW YORK was

aware, prior to the incident, that the individual defendants lacked the objectivity, temperament, maturity, discretion, and disposition to be employed as police officers. Despite such notice, defendant CITY of NEW YORK has retained these officers, and failed to adequately train and supervise them.

25. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING sustained, *inter alia*, physical injuries, emotional distress, embarrassment, and humiliation, and deprivation of his liberty and his constitutional rights.

AS AND FOR A FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION
(Deprivation of Rights Under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

26. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs “1” through “25” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

27. All of the aforementioned acts of defendants, their agents, servants and employees were carried out under the color of state law.

28. All of the aforementioned acts deprived plaintiff CODY PFLEGING of the rights, privileges and immunities guaranteed to citizens of the United States by the Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America, and in violation of 42 U.S.C. §§ 1981 and 1983.

29. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual defendants in their capacities as police officers, with the entire actual and/or apparent authority attendant thereto.

30. The acts complained of were carried out by the aforementioned individual defendants in their capacities as police officers, pursuant to the customs, usages, practices, procedures, and the rules of the CITY OF NEW YORK and the New York City Police

Department, all under the supervision of ranking officers of said department.

31. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, engaged in conduct that constituted a custom, usage, practice, procedure or rule of the respective municipality/authority, which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

32. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION
(Excessive Force under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

33. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "32" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

34. The level of force employed by defendants was excessive, objectively unreasonable and otherwise in violation of plaintiff CODY PFLENGING'S constitutional rights.

35. As a result of the aforementioned conduct of defendants, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING was subjected to excessive force and sustained physical injuries.

36. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION
(First Amendment Claim under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

37. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in

paragraphs numbered “1” through “36” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

38. The acts of the defendants were in retaliation for plaintiff’s exercise of his First Amendment freedom of speech and expression, and not in response to any unlawful acts of the plaintiff.

39. As a result of the aforementioned conduct of defendants, plaintiff was subjected to retaliation for the exercise of their First Amendment rights.

40. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorney’s fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Failure to Intervene under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

41. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “40” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

42. Defendants had an affirmative duty to intervene on behalf of plaintiff CODY PFLEGING, whose constitutional rights were being violated in their presence by other officers.

43. The defendants failed to intervene to prevent the unlawful conduct described herein.

44. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING was subjected to excessive force and he was put in fear of his safety.

45. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable

attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Supervisory Liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

46. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "45" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

47. The supervisory defendants personally caused plaintiff CODY PFLEGING'S constitutional injury by being deliberately or consciously indifferent to the rights of others in failing to properly supervise and train their subordinate employees.

48. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Municipal Liability under 42 U.S.C. § 1983)

49. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "48" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

50. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, engaged in conduct that constituted a custom, usage, practice, procedure or rule of the respective municipality/authority, which is forbidden by the Constitution of the United States.

51. The aforementioned customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York Police Department included, but were not limited to, using excessive force against individuals and retaliating against individuals for exercising their right to free speech, and engaging in falsification.

52. In addition, the City of New York engaged in a policy, custom or practice of inadequate screening, hiring, retaining, training, and supervising its employees, as well as a custom or practice of falsification, that was the moving force behind the violation of plaintiff CODY PFLEGING'S rights as described herein. As a result of the failure of the City of New York to properly recruit, screen, train, discipline, and supervise its officers, including the individual defendants, defendant CITY OF NEW YORK has tacitly authorized, ratified, and has been deliberately indifferent to, the acts and conduct complained of herein.

53. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York Police Department constituted deliberate indifference to the safety, well-being and constitutional rights of plaintiff CODY PFLEGING.

54. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department were the direct and proximate cause of the constitutional violations suffered by plaintiff CODY PFLEGING as alleged herein.

55. The foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department were the moving force behind the Constitutional violations suffered by plaintiff CODY PFLEGING as alleged herein.

56. As a result of the foregoing customs, policies, usages, practices, procedures and rules of the City of New York and the New York City Police Department, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING was subjected to excessive force.

57. Defendants, collectively and individually, while acting under color of state law, were directly and actively involved in violating plaintiff CODY PFLEGING'S constitutional rights.

58. All of the foregoing acts by defendants deprived plaintiff CODY PFLEGING of federally protected rights, including, but not limited to, the right to be free from the use of excessive force and/or the failure to intervene;

59. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

Supplemental State Law Claims

60. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "59" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

61. Within ninety (90) days after the claim herein accrued, plaintiff duly served upon, presented to and filed with the CITY OF NEW YORK, a Notice of Claim setting forth all facts and information required under the General Municipal Law 50-e.

62. The CITY OF NEW YORK has wholly neglected or refused to make an adjustment or payment thereof and more than thirty (30) days have elapsed since the presentation of such claim as aforesaid.

63. This action was commenced within one (1) year and ninety (90) days after the cause of action herein accrued.

64. This action falls within one or more of the exceptions as outlined in C.P.L.R. 1602.

AS AND FOR A SEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION (Assault under the laws of the State of New York)

65. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in

paragraphs numbered “1” through “64” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

66. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING was placed in apprehension of imminent harmful and offensive bodily contact.

67. As a result of defendants’ conduct, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING has suffered physical pain and mental anguish, together with shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment, and humiliation.

68. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys’ fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR AN EIGHTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Battery under the laws of the State of New York)

69. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “68” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

70. Defendants made offensive contact with plaintiff without privilege or consent.

71. As a result of defendants’ conduct, plaintiff has suffered serious physical injuries, pain and mental anguish, together with shock, fright, apprehension, embarrassment, and humiliation.

72. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys’ fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A NINTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress under the laws of the State of New York)

73. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “72” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

74. The aforementioned conduct was extreme and outrageous, and exceeded all reasonable bounds of decency.

75. The aforementioned conduct was committed by defendants while acting within the scope of their employment by defendant CITY OF NEW YORK.

76. The aforementioned conduct was committed by defendants while acting in furtherance of their employment by defendant CITY OF NEW YORK.

77. The aforementioned conduct was intentional and for the sole purpose of causing severe emotional distress to plaintiff.

78. As a result of the aforementioned conduct, plaintiff suffered emotional distress, physical and mental injury, together with embarrassment, humiliation, shock, fright, and loss of freedom.

79. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys’ fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A TENTH CAUSE OF ACTION

(Negligent Screening, Hiring, and Retention under the laws of the State of New York)

80. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraph numbered “1” through “79” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

81. Upon information and belief, defendant CITY OF NEW YORK failed to use reasonable care in the screening, hiring and retention of the aforesaid defendants who conducted and participated in the use of force against plaintiff.

82. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK knew, or should have know in the exercise of reasonable care, the propensities of the individual defendants to engage in the wrongful conduct heretofore alleged in this Complaint.

83. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR AN ELEVENTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Negligent Training and Supervision under the laws of the State of New York)

84. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered "1" through "83" with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

85. Upon information and belief the defendant CITY OF NEW YORK failed to use reasonable care in the training and supervision of the aforesaid defendants who conducted and participated in the and excessive use of force against plaintiff.

86. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A TWELFTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Negligence under the laws of the State of New York)

87. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “86” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

88. Plaintiff’s injuries herein were caused by the carelessness, recklessness and negligence of the defendant CITY OF NEW YORK and its employees and agents, who were on duty and acting in the scope of their employment when they engaged in the wrongful conduct described herein.

89. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys’ fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

AS AND FOR A THIRTEENTH CAUSE OF ACTION
(Respondeat Superior liability under the laws of the State of New York)

90. Plaintiff repeats, reiterates, and realleges each and every allegation contained in paragraphs numbered “1” through “89” with the same force and effect as if fully set forth herein.

91. Defendant CITY OF NEW YORK is vicariously liable for the acts of its employees and agents who were on duty and acting in the scope of their employment when they engaged in the wrongful conduct described herein.

92. As a result of the foregoing, plaintiff CODY PFLENGING is entitled to compensatory damages in an amount to be fixed by a jury, and is further entitled to punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be fixed by a jury, plus reasonable attorneys’ fees, costs and disbursements of this action.

WHEREFORE, plaintiff CODY PFLEGING demands judgment and prays for the following relief, jointly and severally, against the defendants:

- (A) full and fair compensatory damages in an amount to be determined by a jury;
- (B) punitive damages against the individual defendants in an amount to be determined by a jury;
- (C) reasonable attorneys' fees and the costs and disbursements of this action; and
- (D) such other and further relief as appears just and proper.

Dated: Brooklyn, New York
May 7, 2014

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(718) 722-4100

By: /s/
BRETT H. KLEIN (BK4744)

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

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STEPHEN GRANT,

Plaintiff,

-against-

13 CV 3742
(WFK) (VVP)

CITY OF NEW YORK, JOSEPH CENTNER, Individually,
DOMINICK RASO, Individually, FRANK LUPO, Individually,
THOMAS REILLY, Individually, and JOHN and JANE DOE 1
through 10, Individually (the names John and Jane Doe being
fictitious, as the true names are presently unknown),

Defendants.

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AMENDED COMPLAINT

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